

The DTB has three working groups. There will be three brief reports but only one (the Fundraising/ Financing Working Group) was available at the time of mailout and the full paper will be sent via email, available on the DT website and copies available on the night.

### **Fundraising/Financing Working Group**

This report captures the current status of both fundraising (efforts aimed at raising money) and financing (efforts aimed at raising capital – i.e. affordably borrowing money); two complementary activities required to support the playing budget and our pursuit of a new Stadium in Wimbledon.

The Fundraising/Financing Working Group (FWG) consists of three DTB members (Iain McNay, Kris Stewart and Matthew Breach), supported by the FCB (mainly Erik Samuelson) and the DT Secretariat (David Hall and David Reeves). The remit of the group is to create an overarching strategy for fundraising and financing, to oversee and co-ordinate current activities in this area, to develop and implement new schemes and to better communicate to our fan base what we are doing and why.

#### **The Challenge ...**

The Club's income comes mainly from match day ticket, bar and hospitality sales, our share of Football League TV and other rights, commercial sponsorship and donations from fans. Unfortunately, as we all know, English football is far from a 'level playing field', and to meet their ambitions for footballing success most other clubs receive additional playing funds from their owners. But we, the fans, are AFC Wimbledon's owners, and Club income alone simply cannot provide enough cash for us to be competitive – which means we, the fans, have to provide the shortfall. In 2011/12, we had the 4th lowest playing budget in League Two - which is why fund-raising is absolutely essential if we are to survive as a League Two club, let alone aspire to rise higher through the League pyramid.

In parallel to our struggle to fund a competitive team on the pitch, we are making progress on the long road to securing a new home ground back in Wimbledon. Realising that dream is likely to involve the need to raise capital to support the project. Enabling development will be part of any realistic scheme, but if we are to get the stadium we want and need then as a minimum we will be employing specialists to work on our behalf on the project and investing in creating a home rather than a simple soulless concrete bowl.

## **Where Are We ...**

Since the share-offering that helped finance our purchase of The Cherry Red Records Stadium, a number of fundraising activities have developed. Over the years of our existence a substantial contribution to the Club's budget has been raised by the Dons Draw, Golden Goals, DT dinners, Velo & Blue rides and Walk Further for Wimbledon to name just a few. Financing to date has been achieved through the Barclay's loan and the Dons Trust Bond.

Around 18 months ago the DTB created a list of potential ideas to augment these activities. Many of these ideas are now in place, with the Blue and Yellow Club in particular raising a significant amount towards the playing budget on an ongoing basis. The work on providing the basis for a community share scheme to support financing is also well advanced and the constitutional amendments needed to support it will be presented to members at this SGM.

One of the more ambitious ideas tabled at that time was for a "12<sup>th</sup> Man Club" to raise funds directly for the playing budget; this has been overtaken by the superb work of the team of volunteers who created the We Are Wimbledon Fund. This initiative has raised short-term funds and, critically, promises to deliver a significant year-on-year amount which can be directly invested in the squad.

## **What Next?**

The next step we need to take is to lay out the array of different activities, including mature schemes, recent initiatives and ideas still in development. From this we will create a cohesive explanation of "where the money goes"; providing greater clarity for fans to enable each individual to make an informed choice about which fundraising activities to support depending on their financial circumstances. This approach will also enable the proposed Community Shares scheme to be clearly communicated and marketed as supporting the financing of the new stadium in Merton.

Building on this we will then look to reinvigorate and support some of the more mature schemes that haven't been the focus of attention for a while as well as push on with the development of new ideas. On a quite different front, we will also be supporting efforts by organisations such as Supporters Direct and the FSF to address some of the fundamental issues with football financing as a whole – the more level the playing field the better we as a Club will be able to compete.

Lastly, the group will be co-ordinating closely with the other Working Groups, the FCB and the nascent AFC Wimbledon Foundation to ensure we are fully aligned. Concepts such as "branding" are key to our entire community and must be developed with a view of the whole rather than to support a single initiative.